

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of the Inspector General

Inspector General



**Executive Summary Concerning the Results of the
Report of Investigation by the Inspector General of the District of Columbia
Into an Allegation that Ronnie Few Produced a False Resume
at the Time He was Being Considered for the Position of
Fire & Emergency Medical Services Department Chief**

Investigation 2002-0265(S)

Upon receipt of a memorandum from the Executive Office of the Mayor (EOM) and the District of Columbia Office of Personnel (DCOP), the District of Columbia Office of the Inspector General (OIG) conducted an investigation of the selection process of Chief Ronnie FEW, Fire & Emergency Medical Services Department (FEMS), concerning the circumstances surrounding the discovery of false information on his resume. Specifically, the memorandum asked whether Chief FEW may have “lied” on the job application materials he submitted to the District government officials who considered his candidacy for the position of FEMS Chief. Those items were: a) whether he received a degree from Morris Brown College; and b) whether he correctly identified the organization that presented him with two professional awards, “Fire Chief of the Year” and “Most Innovative Fire Chief of the Year.”

On May 29, 2002, the EOM announced that Chief FEW would be resigning, effective July 31, 2002. Notwithstanding this development, the OIG was compelled to investigate the allegations that Chief FEW may have violated the District’s false statements statute. Such a violation could be subject to criminal prosecution, and the OIG has the responsibility of referring such findings to the United States Attorney to decide whether the findings have prosecutorial merit. *See* D.C. Code § 2-302.08(f) (2001).

Based upon the concerns raised by the EOM, the OIG identified the following issues for investigation:

- Whether Chief FEW’s resume and profile/biography contained false information.
- Whether Chief FEW intentionally or negligently submitted an inaccurate resume for consideration for the position of FEMS Chief.
- Whether the misrepresentations were material in the selection of FEW as FEMS Chief.

Furthermore, the OIG investigated several issues, which indicate the need for corrective action by the EOM in order to prevent misrepresentations and contracting irregularities regarding the personnel selection process in the future. Specifically, the investigation identified improprieties in the award of a contract to an executive recruitment firm by the DCOP. This firm contracted with the District government to identify candidates for the FEMS Chief position via a purchase order and was required to perform certain background and due diligence checks pursuant to the same.

During the investigation into the selection process for Chief FEW, the OIG identified the following two issues:

- Whether the contracting process for the selection of candidates for the position of FEMS Chief was flawed.
- Whether the contractor employed by the District to locate candidates for the position of FEMS Chief failed to fully perform the services required by the contract.

I. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A. Whether Chief FEW's Resume and Profile/Biography Contained False Information.

SUBSTANTIATED. During the recruitment process, FEW caused his resume, with an attached profile/biography, to be transmitted to the executive recruitment firm. The OIG's investigation revealed that FEW's resume references an "Arts & Sciences" degree from Morris Brown College but fails to specify when this degree was obtained. FEW admitted in his interview that the reference to an "Arts & Sciences" degree is inaccurate because no such degree was bestowed on him. In addition, the profile/biography provided by FEW contained inaccurate information regarding awards received by FEW. The awards listed indicate that they were bestowed by the International Association of Fire Fighters and the International Association of Fire Chiefs. These awards were actually conveyed to FEW by the Carl Holmes Executive Development Institute, a company that markets training services to fire departments.

B. Whether Chief FEW Intentionally or Negligently Submitted an Inaccurate Resume and Profile/Biography for Consideration for the Position of FEMS Chief.

SUBSTANTIATED. In his interviews with the OIG, FEW acknowledged that he instructed a subordinate employee in Augusta, Georgia, to transmit his resume and an accompanying profile/biography to the recruitment firm. The materials submitted contained inaccurate information concerning his educational background and awards. FEW denied that he knew that the information submitted contained erroneous information, and there was no testimony or evidence to prove conclusively that he

intentionally placed the inaccurate information on the materials, that he told another to place inaccurate information on these materials, or that he was aware that another individual was responsible for the misinformation. During his confirmation hearings, FEW corrected the errors regarding his education and awards in his public testimony. Yet, he took no action to withdraw the erroneous written versions of his resume to prevent further public dissemination.

The issue is substantiated because FEW is ultimately responsible for the submission of inaccurate information in furtherance of his application for the FEMS Chief position. His failure to review his resume and his application materials at the time of their creation, at the time of submission to the District government, or at any time in between, was grossly negligent.

Because Chief FEW did not complete an official Application for Employment with the District government, the District's false statements statute was not implicated. *See* D.C. Code § 22-2405 (2001).¹ The results of this investigation were presented to the United States Attorney's Office, District of Columbia, which declined criminal prosecution.

C. Whether the Misrepresentations were Material in the Selection of FEW as FEMS Chief.

UNSUBSTANTIATED. The OIG questioned various members of the selection committee and EOM personnel who interviewed FEW, and no one claimed that FEW's educational background and awards were material to his selection as FEMS Chief.² The evidence indicates that the selection committee was aware that FEW did not have a four-year degree but that it was more concerned with other areas (e.g., FEW's work experience and mediation skills). Indeed, the position description created at the outset of the search does not mention an educational prerequisite for the FEMS Chief position. None of the people involved in the interview and selection process said they would have changed their recommendations if they had known that FEW received his awards from the Carl Holmes Executive Development Institute. However, if the selection committee had inquired as to the accuracy of this information, it is possible that the committee members would have placed a much higher level of credibility on an award from a nonprofit professional society than one derived from a company that provides training to fire departments. Finally, it is reasonable to conclude that the committee would have been disturbed had it learned that the source of the award was not accurately stated. For this reason, FEW's misrepresentation of the origin of these awards was a significant deception, even if the misrepresented facts were not material.

¹ Section 9 of the District government Application for Employment reads, in pertinent part: "I understand that a false statement on this form or materials submitted with this form is punishable by criminal penalties pursuant to D.C. Code § 22-2514 *et seq.* (1991 Repl.)." Section 22-2514 is presently codified at D.C. Code § 22-2405 (2001).

² However, the Mayor has recently expressed his dismay with the fact that FEW's application materials misstated his awards.

D. Whether the Contracting Process for the Selection of Candidates for the Position of FEMS Chief was Flawed.

SUBSTANTIATED. The OIG found three deficiencies in regard to the contracting process. First, the District government employee who executed the purchase order for the services of the executive recruitment firm was not a contracting officer. Therefore, she did not have contracting authority and should not have signed or executed the agreement on behalf of the District government. Second, DCOP treated the agreement under the small purchase procedures but paid the recruitment firm in excess of the \$25,000 statutory cap for these types of purchases; this raised an appearance of a split procurement, which violates District law.³ Third, there was no responsible official in place to provide adequate oversight for the administration of the contract on behalf of the District government. Such monitoring might have ensured that complete and comprehensive background investigations were conducted on all of the candidates.

E. Whether the Contractor Employed by the District to Locate Candidates for the Position of FEMS Chief Failed to Fully Perform the Services Required by the Contract.

UNSUBSTANTIATED. DCOP awarded the executive recruitment firm a purchase order based upon the services the firm proposed to perform in order to locate a FEMS Chief. A preponderance of the evidence indicates that the executive recruitment firm performed the services as set forth in its proposal.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings in this investigation, the Inspector General recommends the following:

- The EOM establish a comprehensive and uniform practice and policy for conducting due diligence checks with respect to the selection of Executive Service personnel to Cabinet and other high-level positions in the District government. This policy should include a process that ensures that all of the information contained in the candidate's resume and other background information is accurate and complete.
- All Executive Service personnel, as with all new applicants to positions in the District government, be required to complete the District of Columbia Government Employment Application, which contains a provision (Section 9) that advises the applicant that a false statement on any part of the application may be grounds for not hiring the applicant or for termination of the employee. This section also warns the applicant that making a false statement on the application or materials submitted with the application (such as a resume) is punishable as a

³ See D.C. Code § 2-303.21 (2001); *see also* 27 DCMR § 1800.5.

criminal violation under the D.C. Code.

- The DCOP carefully review its contracting practices with respect to executive recruiters. The small purchase order may be an inappropriate mechanism to use for a potentially long-term executive recruitment process. A more structured contract may have allowed for more competitive bidding and the inclusion of a Contracting Officers Technical Representative (COTR) to ensure full accountability for service delivery and contract costs.
- The DCOP take corrective action to ensure that its procurements are handled by a contracting officer with the requisite legal authority to execute contracts on behalf of the District government through a written delegation by the CPO.